824 considered as the founding ancestor transformed into a tree. The old men of the village come to the tree each year, leaning their backs against its trunk, while the placentae of newly delivered women are hung on it (1).

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1. The balanza groves around the Bambara settlements have attracted the attention of botanists. M. G. Roberty, in Les Associations végétales de la vallée moyenne du Niger /The Vegetable Associations of the Middle Nigerian Valley/, has studied their agricultural role: "The Dumosaeptum arboreitoides, cultivation under the balanzas. Artificial, well defined landscape. Trees losing their leaves during the rainy season, regaining them during the dry season, thorny, regularly spaced, but planted in the distant past. The Acacia albida loses its leaves in June and grows them again in December, thus furnishing shade in the dry season and humus in the rainy season. The Dumosaeptum owes it its permanent villages.... The date of the introduction of this very useful tree into the western Sudan remains shrouded in mystery, as is the time and method of its dissemination over cultivated fields. It is probable that the Acacia albida comes from eastern Africa, somewhere south of the equator. How did it come as far as the Bambara country without losing its original seasonal cycle? What sultan, or what agronomer of genius forced its multiplication around the Bambara villages? These questions remain, for the time being, without answers. The tales of the first European conquerors seem to have proved that numerous "tatas," the enormous citadels of red mud, were enclosed by living balanzas fences with joined trunks... It is probable that their military use has preceeded everywhere their agricultural use... We have very little information concerning

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the latter... We are familiar enough with the Bambara agricultural customs, but none of them would have brought about the spread of the balanzas, their regular spacing in the fields, and their protection from goats. In almost all the cases we have observed, the balanzas are of considerable age, development and density. There lies in this subject a fine dissertation topic for a young ethnographer and naturalist." (pp. 135, 136).

The myths of the Bambara answer M. Roberty's questions.

/39/ Mousso Koroni

776 Mousso Koroni is the impure earth; she symbolizes all that is opposed to light: darkness, night, witchcraft. She is also the symbol of rebellion, disorder, and impurity. Pemba pursued her in vain in his effort to take back what he had given her: the "words" she had received from him were divulged to men in spite of him.

Although no cult honors her and no sacrifice is offered her, her name is cited in various ceremonies and mentioned in the chants; her actions are recalled by certain gestures in the ritual.

776 304 On the other hand, she is the initiator of the separation of the sexes realized in the human body by the removal of the foreskin and the clitoris, an operation which after her betrayal, she performed on all those she met. In this way, she placed them in the same state of rupture in which she found herself: a female principle as opposed to Pemba, the male principle. In addition, she is present in every human being in the form of an evil force, the wanzo, which she had communicated to all those she approached, and of which one must rid oneself through the methods she herself inaugurated: circumcision and excision (1).

1. See p. 95.

776 241 Mousso Koroni is also the originator of certain agricultural techniques which she taught men, and every year, in certain villages, she

243 manifesting itself too violently and afterwards hold back the receding
312 waters. In the Sahel, the arrangements affect the plains bordering the Niger, where earthen dikes protect the rice from the floods and also control the tributary lakes where they join the river, holding the receding waters in the lakes, thus permitting transplantation of the rice and preventing the subsiding flood from drowning the plants before harvest. From 1944 to 1949, 101,550 hectares were regulated in this manner in the upper valley, the Delta, and the valley of the Sahel.
243 There is a plan to regulate 331,000 new hectares by 1956. In addition, experiments in mechanical tillage have begun. Up until now two methods of cultivation have been applied.

a. Without burning: the hoed land is prepared in furrows 40 to 50 centimeters apart; the seeding is done in seed holes 25 centimeters apart along the furrows. (1)

1. L'agronomie tropicale [Tropical Agronomy], July-August, 1950. [Ed., Revue d'agronomie tropicale, 1951.]

b. With burning: the wild grasses are pulled up in March and April and gathered in beds 1 meter wide and 3 to 6 meters long. They are lightly covered with earth and then set on fire. At the end of June the mounds are turned by hoe, and the seeds planted in holes 30 centimeters apart and 4 centimeters deep. Fifteen grains are put in each hole, or 45 to 50 kilograms per hectare. The yields vary between 800 and 1,200 kilograms of paddy per hectare.

To these basic crops are added the following early carry-over crops:

The millets. Fonio (Digitaria exilis) is cultivated in the region of Senegambia, and iburu (D. Iburna) in the central sector of the Sudan.

Maize and banana trees south of Bamako. Maize is the most widespread crop after millet. Nevertheless, some maize is imported
[351] from Dahomey. Banana trees are planted around the huts and form a belt around the villages. They are also planted in the small fields which border the water courses. Large bananas are harvested which are picked green and cooked.

● 245 Mango trees, recently imported (about fifty years ago), give
177 an excellent yield and are destined to be developed more and more.

Kola nuts are much prized by the natives;
their caffeine content makes them a stimulant and energizer. The Bambara use seven kinds of kola nuts in their sacrificial and divinatory rites: 1. Dangoro (red nut); 2. Geleworo (white nut); Sosokuworo (a red nut pointed at one end); 4. Flaniworo (yellow kola); 5. Worodanda (kola without opening) which has no apparent cleft where it may be split open; 6. Bassiworo (a dark red, bitter nut); 7. Ryeworo (nut of light and indeterminate color). (This list is given us by G. Dieterlen in her Essai sur la religion Bambara [Essay on the Bambara Religion]).

To prepare kola nuts, they are placed in baskets of very coarse mesh lined with leaves that are moistened every four or five days.

Among cultivated trees, other than banana, mango, lemon, orange, pineapple trees [ananas, may be a kind of pine; the pineapple is not a tree fruit], etc., one must mention the Acacia albida, which plays a large role in Bambara mythology. In the dry season, it is used as fodder for cattle.

[32] C. Textile Crops

Side by side with these food crops, the Bambara cultivate textile plants which they use in addition to the wild textile plants. Among the principal ones, we shall point out the da (Hibiscus cannabinus) whose fibers are used by fishermen to make their nets. It does not rot and is a possible rival of jute. The labor to exploit it, pulling up the stalks, retting, extraction of the fibers, is done in the dry season, when many hands are available. (1)

1. G. Spitz, L'Ouest africain français [The French West African]. [Ed., L'Ouest africain, A.O.F. et Togo; The West African, French West Africa and Togo.]

Cotton, which grows spontaneously in many places, is cultivated near the villages as an annual plant; it is a perennial plant which renews itself every four or five years. During the cultivation cycle, it is grown between millet and maize. The harvesting is done by women; it is picked out and spun by women, but it is woven